

I got a fascinating letter the other day from the mother of a soldier stationed in Camp Eagle, Specialist Christina Campbell. And the mother said, "So as you get busy spreading holiday cheer, don't forget the peacekeepers and those they hold dear." And Specialist Campbell actually wrote a poem. So I want to tell you, I took just a little bit out of it, because I want you to know that at this Christmas you are in the hearts of the American people. And her words are your words. Listen to these, she says, "No, this is not our soil, and it's not our own fight. But if you've seen what I have, then you know that it's right."

God bless you all, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:30 p.m. at Club 21. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Larry R. Ellis, USA, commander, 1st Armored Division.

Message on the Observance of Christmas, 1997

December 22, 1997

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Christmas.

At this time of year, when the nights grow longer and often colder, our lives are brightened and our hearts warmed by the lights of Christmas. So much light surrounds our memories and celebration of Christmas: candlelight in the windows, colored lights twinkling on the tree, children's faces lit with a joy that is reflected in their parents' eyes. The beloved Christmas story itself is a story of light, for, as the Gospel of John tells us, Jesus came into the world as "the true Light" that illumines all humankind.

Almost 2,000 years later, that Light still shines amid the dark places of our world. It is reflected in the lives of so many quiet and generous people who strive daily to make life better for others—feeding the hungry, caring for the ill and elderly, cherishing and nurturing children. It radiates from the hearts of those who work for peace and justice in their communities, our nation, and the world. It shines in the efforts of men and women striving to break down the walls of fear, ignorance, and prejudice that cast shadows across too many lives and prevent us from becoming the people God intended us to be.

May all who celebrate Christmas this year rejoice in the special gifts of light that it brings: the love that warms our hearts, the faith that lights our journey, and the hope that promises us a bright future. Hillary and I wish you joy and peace during this Christmas season and much happiness in the New Year.

Bill Clinton

Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa, 1997

December 22, 1997

Warm greetings to everyone observing Kwanzaa.

As America embarks on a season of renewal and reconciliation, the principles of Kwanzaa—unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith—ring true not only for African Americans, but also for all Americans. By emphasizing the importance of family in our lives and the blessings that come with a true commitment to community, opportunity, and responsibility, the celebration of Kwanzaa can help us to enter the future as a stronger nation and a more compassionate and united people.

The symbols and ceremony of Kwanzaa, evoking the rich history and heritage of African Americans, remind us that our nation draws much of its strength from our diversity. As millions of Americans observe Kwanzaa this year, let us renew our commitment to realizing America's promise as a land where all people are free to pursue our common dreams—to live in peace, to provide for our families, and to give our children the opportunity for a better life.

Hillary joins me in sending best wishes for a joyous Kwanzaa.

Bill Clinton

Statement on the Death of Esther Peterson

December 22, 1997

Hillary and I were saddened to learn of the death of Esther Peterson. She was the mother of the modern consumer movement,